



***Year 2 Final Report***  
***October 2016***

Submitted by: *Valerie Warmington, Project Manager*  
*October 2016*

## Introduction

Nelson at its Best is a multi-sectoral poverty reduction initiative sponsored by the Nelson Social Planning Action Network (SPAN) Society. Its aim is to help residents, businesses and community leaders develop a framework and long term strategy to reduce and ultimately end poverty thereby making our community the 'best it can be'. Not only do reductions in poverty lead to a more caring, connected, egalitarian and empowered community, poverty reduction improves community health, reduces social tension, reduces crime and improves community safety, increases economic activity and expands the tax base. In short, although some may not be impoverished, poverty affects us all.

Work undertaken during Year I of the project identified children, youth and young adults, low-income employed people, seniors on fixed income, and people with disabilities, mental health or addiction challenges as being most at risk of poverty and its adverse impacts. Work undertaken in Year 1 also identified an extensive list of areas where poverty impacts people and where attention could be focused on making improvements. An agreed set of principles in line with which the work of Nelson at its Best would proceed emerged.

During Year II, work was undertaken to research and better understand how and where poverty exists specifically in Nelson and how it is experienced by those living in poverty. Efforts were made to meaningfully engage people with direct experience of poverty in the planning and implementation of initiatives to end it. Efforts were made to broadly inform community about poverty in Nelson and to engage individuals, business, government and other agencies and individuals in designing a plan and taking action to end poverty.

Presenting a Poverty Reduction Strategic Framework for Nelson and a description of the work undertaken in Year II is the focus of this report.

## Guiding Principles

*Nelson at its Best:*

- *actively engages and gives voice to people experiencing poverty*
- *promotes human rights-based approaches in responding to poverty*
- *recognizes the need for innovation and systems change and is willing to pilot new ideas*
- *knows that ending poverty requires solutions that can be easily replicated and scaled up*
- *believes that everyone in community must be involved for lasting, positive change to happen*
- *aims to operate as a community initiative rather than as a conventional organization*

## Goal 1: Develop a working Poverty Reduction Strategic Framework

Review community input, literature review, asset inventory, social determinants of health, etc. and develop a working Poverty Reduction Strategic Framework.

This Framework identifies the four key pillars of our Poverty Reduction Strategy:

1. Core Supports and Services
2. Sustainable Livelihoods
3. Justice and Peace
4. Knowledge and Awareness

This Framework facilitates quick, comprehensive overviews of the poverty landscape in community that helps focus thinking, discussion, and action. The framework provides a structure in which to assess the likely well-being of people living in poverty in Nelson and, therefore, serves to help focus and direct Nelson at its Best's (NaiB) priority areas.



The key principles of **engaging and giving voice to people with lived experience** and of working from a **human rights perspective** are included to help keep them front of mind when reviewing community and project status in the pillars and focus areas listed along the left side of the framework.



To Participate Meaningfully and with Dignity in Community.

CHARITY → EVOLUTION → HUMAN RIGHTS → ADVOCATE ASSIST ACT → EMPOWERMENT

IN CRISIS → VULNERABLE → SAFE → STABLE → RESILIENT → SECURE → THRIVING

	RESOURCES MEANS	CHOICES AVAILABILITY	OPPORTUNITY CAPACITY	POWER VOICE
<b>CORE SUPPORTS AND SERVICES</b>				
HOUSING				
FOOD SECURITY				
HEALTH				
TRANSPORTATION				
MUNICIPAL SERVICES				
EDUCATION				
EARLY CARE AND LEARNING				
MENTAL HEALTH				
<b>SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS</b>				
EMPLOYMENT (JOBS)				
LIVABLE WAGES				
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE				
SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING				
ENGAGED BUSINESS SECTOR				
<b>JUSTICE AND PEACE</b>				
EQUALITY (HUMAN RIGHTS)				
DEMOCRACY				
ENVIRONMENT				
<b>KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS</b>				
PUBLIC EDUCATION				
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT				
TECHNOLOGY				

This graphic shows the pillars of the Poverty Reduction Framework and how an individual or a community can move along a continuum toward greater empowerment and power through increased opportunities.

**Goal 2: Use demographic data to guide strategy development in support of specific at-risk groups in our population**

Analyze tax-filer and demographic data

2010 and 2011 tax filer data was analyzed to produce a ‘poverty profile of Nelson’, formatted as a power-point presentation and discussed with the NaiB steering committee (Appendix 1). In combination with a survey of existing activities underway in community, the following demographic subgroupings were prioritized:

- low income earners especially single individuals;
- children, especially those in single-headed households;
- youth and young adults approaching or in the early stages of independent economic life.

NaiB made use of the Nelson poverty profile when commenting to media, in speaking to other organizations and potential 'champions'. The data was also used to design and comment on FACEBOOK posts and in the production of printed outreach materials.

The Nelson poverty profile comprised a core part of the information presented to City Council at its Committee of the Whole meeting of September 19, 2016. The presentation took place in advance of Council's participation in provincial-level meetings at the UBCM<sup>1</sup> convention providing Nelson City staff and elected officials with data of relevance to their discussions at UBCM.

Nelson's approach to using tax-filer data was shared with other Basin end-poverty coalitions (Trail, Castlegar, Revelstoke), and with the Ministry of Child and Family Development Poverty Reduction Initiative (MCFD). The statistics were discussed with RDI in the context of other ways in which tax-filer data might be used to support community efforts to end poverty. The assistance of Selkirk College's Rural Development Institute was invaluable in helping confirm Nelson's statistical analysis of poverty and providing assurance of its reliability.

The tax-filer data analysis and production of the Nelson Poverty Profile provided important planning and awareness raising information of broad interest in community. The information was well-covered by media.

Next steps: Statistical data gathering and analysis requires a particular expertise that RDI is able to more efficiently, accurately and consistently provide than individual end-poverty groups. Recognizing this, the Director of RDI successfully applied for funding to pilot the research. The initiative to develop a template of poverty indicators able to be tracked over time and compared basin-wide is underway.

**Develop a market basket measure of poverty. Update the 'living wage' and confirm using different family dynamics.**

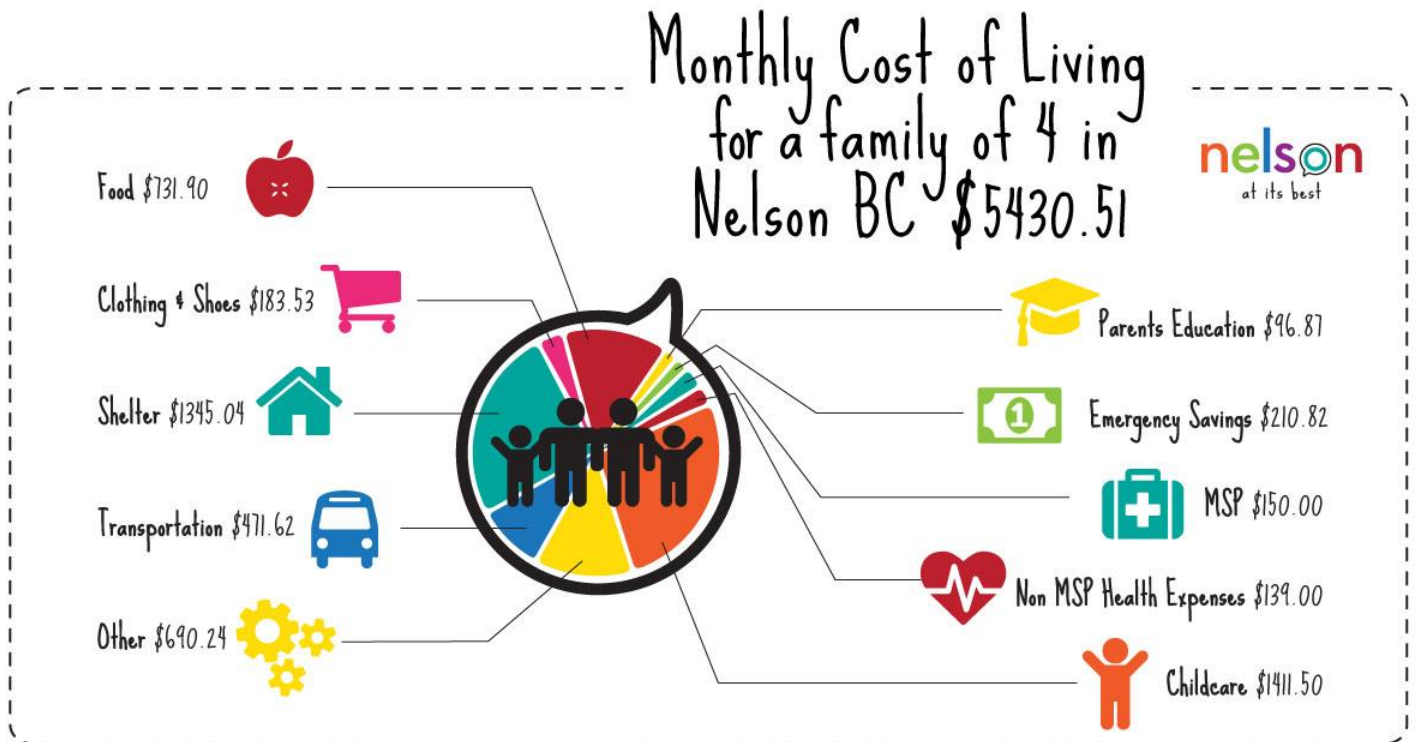
The market basket measure of the cost of living in Nelson was updated using a calculation adapted by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) from Statistics Canada's market basket calculation. The adapted calculation provides improved estimation of the costs for a family of four to meet their needs without falling into poverty over time.

This calculation puts Nelson's living wage at \$18.21 per hour based on 2015 costs<sup>2</sup>. This is down slightly from last year due to the effects of the newly-introduced child benefit program on the reference family of four used in the calculation.

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<sup>1</sup> Union of British Columbia Municipalities

<sup>2</sup> The Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives asked that NaiB update food costs as a recent report shows an increase in costs. They also questioned the rental rate used (estimate based on market survey data rather than CMHC estimate). Finally they suggested childcare rates were too high however Nelson's least expensive options were included in NaiB's calculation. In the interim, the amounts in question do not make significant difference to Nelson's cost of living data or its living wage and therefore NaiB continues to rely on its original data while awaiting further comments from CCPA.



The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives states that the living wage produced for the reference family of four is generally representative of the needs of other households as well. To test this in Nelson, two strategies were applied to consider the living wage in relation to different family sizes:

- Statistics Canada's family size adjustment calculation
- Adapted CCPA calculation

Both the family size adjustment calculation and the CCPA approach of using local costs where possible produce similar results for all tested family types suggesting that the 'living wage' is generally sufficient to meet the needs of a single person but that single parents relying solely on minimum wage employment along with child-related tax credits and subsidies would likely live in poverty. A single parent with one child would face a shortfall in the range of \$8,000 annually while a single parent with two children would face a deficit of about \$11,000. Spousal and child support would obviously ameliorate these shortfalls.

The cost of living analysis shows that income indicators used by Statistics Canada are lower than the actual costs of living in Nelson and in many other communities in BC and Canada. This works against calls for higher minimum wage rates, social assistance rates and higher income cutoffs for government subsidies (especially child care) and tax credits. Therefore it is important to contrast annual cost of living figures with government indicators of poverty to further make the point that employment and social assistance policy needs improvement.

The cost of living (market basket) and living wage calculations are important indicators but need regular updating. This year, NaiB mentored two Selkirk College nursing students who undertook the work as part of a practicum requirement. An unexpected benefit to NaiB was the support provided by the RDI which assisted students with the calculations entailed in the living wage work. Social work students might also be a good fit for future updates to this analysis.

Champion: This analysis may also be a good fit for the RDI as this analysis is likely to be of regional interest and use and there is some overlap with data already collected by RDI.

### Goal 3: Increase community awareness of the cost of living in Nelson



## Costs to live in Nelson far exceed means of an average family of four: report

by Timothy Schafer on 20 Sep 2016

The city has become too expensive for a low-income family of four to live in, according to a new study conducted by the Nelson at its Best steering committee. Full story: <http://thenelsondaily.com/news/costs-live-nelson-far-exceed-means-average-family-four-report-42621#.WBFY1CZSPmQ>

Market basket and living wage information was central to a presentation at a Nelson City Committee of the Whole meeting on September 19, 2016. The presentation captured media interest as both print and radio reporters were present. This particular presentation prompted Nelson's cost of living and living wage information to be reported via radio and in print media (Nelson Daily Online, Nelson Star, Juice FM, EZ Rock, Kootenay Coop Radio). It did not generate many comments online but several shares were noted on FACEBOOK.

On the Nelson at its Best website, the cost of living data was paired with an online public awareness tool entitled "Make the Month", developed by United Way (and used with their permission). The cost of living data, living wage and make the month resource were

featured in Nelson at its Best's FACEBOOK posts and in NaiB outreach materials for distribution at events and throughout the City – on billboards, in café's and other locations.

BC'S MINIMUM WAGE \$10.85 / HR LEAVES A FULL TIME WORKER EARNING ABOUT \$4,000 BELOW THE LOW-INCOME LINE SET BY STATISTICS CANADA. BUDGETING WON'T HELP IF THERE SIMPLY ISN'T ENOUGH MONEY TO MAKE ENDS MEET. CAN YOU MAKE THE MONTH EARNING MINIMUM WAGE?



## Goal 4: Identify and include people with lived experience of poverty in NaiB's work

Nelson at its Best works to include those living in, or recovering from, poverty in its work with the goal of bringing to light perspectives and ideas generated by people experiencing poverty and sharing this information with community. In approaching this aspect of the work, the guidelines contained in the document 'Nothing About Us Without Us, were central. <http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/LEAC-7principles-final.pdf>

A pilot 'Lived Experience' project was undertaken (Appendix 2). People with first-hand experience of poverty were asked to reach out to people living in poverty on behalf of Nelson at its Best. One person was contracted to find and talk to people who were housed and stable, but with very low income. Many people approached chose not to speak but several agreed to talk about poverty and their experience of it; and of these people, a few expressed interest in continuing to talk about it. Once several interested people were identified through this process, a group event was held to connect people and stimulate further conversation about poverty.

Single mothers were most represented in the group sessions held during the pilot phase of the project. A variety of issues around which the group might continue to meet were generated for consideration in moving forward.

During the pilot, group participants were offered an honorarium and a meal at the meeting. The pilot group proposed an alternative whereby the meal would be a potluck and the honorarium and catering budget combined and used instead to pay for food purchased in bulk and shared amongst group participants. Not only did they enjoy the pot luck meal they prepared themselves, they and their children benefited by having even more healthy food in their cupboards due to purchasing communally. This illustrated the need for flexibility and an approach that allows participants to decide amongst themselves in order to engage and empower.

One person from the lived experience pilot project attended the SPAN AGM in October 2016 featuring City of Victoria Mayor, Lisa Helps, speaking about municipal involvement in addressing poverty. This same participant agreed to speak to media about her experience and understanding of poverty<sup>3</sup>, and she agreed to represent the group at a Steering Committee meeting. This also suggests the strategy employed will result in lived experience spokespeople and representatives to emerge.

The format of the pilot project worked to engage single mothers such that they connected with each other and with NaiB on issues related to poverty. It is recommended that effort be made to continue minimal support to the groups established during the pilot project until funding for further development becomes available.

There are three areas requiring attention when moving forward:

- Expand to include the voices of other demographic priorities - youth and other sub-groupings within the low income earner category
- Identify and provide training for individuals selected as members of a 'speakers' bureau' of people empowered to take their stories to the community. Continue to invite interested individuals to participate in meetings and events.
- Review how initiatives coming forward from the 'lived experience' work might be further supported by and integrated into the work of NaiB.

While the specific approaches decided by various demographic groups may be different, the principles and goals tested during the pilot study provide a good foundation for future efforts. A grant proposal was

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<sup>3</sup> The request for a media spokesperson was in response to a Vancouver journalist's interest sparked by a press release in which Nelson at its Best was mentioned.



submitted to CBT Social Grants toward continuing and further developing this aspect of Nelson at its Best's work (Appendix 3)<sup>4</sup>. A decision is expected by early January 2017.

## Goal 5: Identify ways to increase affordability of the market basket measure of poverty

Childcare is a significant barrier to the economic well-being of many Nelson families. Nelson at its Best has endorsed and actively promoted the \$10/day childcare initiative.

- Representatives participated in an event coordinated by childcare workers showcasing the documentary 'Poor no More' followed by online discussions with campaign organisers.
- NaiB representatives shared \$10/a day childcare information at a dinner for low-income people sponsored by the West Kootenay Labour Council and Protein for People Society and in various locations throughout the City.
- NaiB (Child Poverty Sub-Committee) assisted in drafting a request for a meeting between City Councillors and Minister Stephanie Cadieux during the 2016 UBCM convention including on childcare<sup>5</sup>.

*Council would like to discuss concerns about the health and social impact of 1 in 5 BC children living in poverty and seek clarity on what we can expect the Province to do differently than it is doing now to address this crisis. The report card on Child Poverty 2015 reports that 50% of BC single mothers and their children live in poverty. Council would like to know if the BC Liberals are considering policy changes, expanded, or new programs or anything to improve the affordability of childcare for low and middle income families beyond the current subsidy program. Council would also like to know if the Ministry of Child and Family Development is working with other BC Ministries to develop a comprehensive strategy to address poverty.*

Nelson City Council's request for meeting with Minister of Child and Family Development, Hon. Stephanie Cadieux.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A suggestion that clinical supervision be included in the project budget came too late. This shortfall should be noted moving forward.

<sup>6</sup>It was learned at the meeting that the BC Government has no plans to change its approach to assisting families with childcare. Although a problem with long waitlists that disproportionately impact children in families unable to afford private therapy was acknowledged, no further support to government-funded early intervention physio- or occupational therapy are planned. Information about a program to assist low-income single parents with employment training was shared. This information has been passed on to organisations working with low-income families.

[http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/supporting\\_affordability/index.htm](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/supporting_affordability/index.htm)

August 24, 2016

On July 20 the Federal Government rolled out a new child benefit system designed to increase the amount of benefits received by families that need it most. Less complex and more progressive than the Universal Child Care Benefit, the Canada Child Tax Benefit and the National Child Benefit Supplement that it replaces, the new system promises to lift 300,000 children out of poverty. This is critically important says *Nelson at its Best* Project Chair, Rona Park, as child poverty rates remain high in Canada despite decades of stated commitment to ending it. Research shows that when children's basic needs are met from an early age they live longer, healthier and more productive lives than children raised in poverty who are more likely to experience adverse economic, social and health outcomes in adulthood.

...

A press release was produced and published in the Nelson Star on the new Child Benefit Program. For full article:

<http://www.nelsonstar.com/eeditions/?iid=i20160824054440176>

Outreach materials on the importance of education savings and government grants to children's RESPs were produced. In partnership with the Kootenay Boundary Early Years Program and Nelson Early Years Table, Nelson at its Best spoke to people and distributed information at the West Kootenay Labour Council's community dinner in October 2016.



Food prices rose significantly in 2015 and continue to rise. Because of the low level of local food security and Nelson’s vulnerability to price pressures on food trucked into the region, a NaiB member has applied to sit on the new Regional Food Council (in part), as liaison for NaiB on the issue of food affordability and security.

**Goal 6: Mobilize the business community, local government and other employers in a living wage campaign. Strategize to introduce the concept widely.**

While the introduction of a living wage could significantly ameliorate the problem of working poverty, there is justified concern amongst small businesses that paying a living wage will make it uneconomical to continue business operations. Government cites these risks to small business and the related threat of job losses as reasons not to increase the minimum wage.

One way to overcome this barrier would be to take into consideration that the majority of minimum wage earners in Canada are employed by large, high profit-generating, multi-national corporations. This suggests that a better approach than dismissing the living wage concept as impossible to achieve might be to argue for supports to small business through a transition to a living wage. An approach that includes protections for small business could remove a barrier to small business participation in the living wage conversation and might lead to greater small business support of the concept. This should be tested with business and discussed with other end-poverty and living wage advocates.

Until recently, the attention of small business in Nelson has been on the debate over a panhandling bylaw. Although this may be changing, the timing has not been ideal to introduce the living wage concept in Nelson.

In partnership with NaiB, the Nelson Area Economic Development Partnership (NAEDP) is considering hosting an event along the lines of one sponsored by Revelstoke Community Futures in 2015. The event in Nelson is envisioned as a similar, but shorter and more locally-focused event. External speakers would be “brought to Nelson” via online means. Nelson at its Best has earmarked its Tamarack Institute coaching funds to kick-start the initiative. Community Futures has indicated the possibility of contributing funding for this event.

Nelson City Councillor Anna Purcell sits on the NAEDP and has actively promoted the hosting of a living wage discussion with the business community. Following her participation in Revelstoke’s Living Wage Forum, Councillor Purcell wrote a newspaper article featured in the Nelson Star. The article was used as a blog topic by Vibrant Communities Canada <http://vibrantcanada.ca/blogs/nelson/poverty-reduction-and-living-wage>

NELSON\*STAR

**COLUMN:  
Poverty  
reduction and  
the Living  
Wage**

The so-called Living Wage for our regional district has been figured to be a little under \$20 per hour, Nelson city councillor Anna Purcell writes

Nelson Star, May 24, 2016

Full article:  
<http://www.nelsonstar.com/opinion/380575641.html>

## Goal 7: Develop a public awareness strategy to improve community understanding and dispel myths about poverty.

A Communications Subcommittee met several times, including with Shauna Fidler of R|Brand Designs, to discuss a public awareness strategy. A key challenge is the requirement for a wide demographic of people to quickly understand a very complex issue. It was thought that coupling simple messages with illustrative graphics would be the most effective way to begin telling the story of poverty in Nelson.

A series of memes were produced using simple messages underscored by illustrative graphics for use in a variety of ways – as postcards (to be mailed to elected officials), rack cards (to incidentally inform people who pick them up in various locations in and out of town), NaiB business cards (a small, inexpensive takeaway containing NaiB email, website and FACEBOOK addresses). The memes were posted to FACEBOOK and to the website.

NaiB has been working to ensure that poverty remains a regular theme in media without burning people out on the issue. This requires tracking what other organizations and individuals are saying in the media and adding

NaiB's voice to reintroduce the issue when media coverage is low and occasionally to add support to what is being said by others.

NaiB attempts to use poverty information to garner the interest of individuals able to integrate NaiB information contextually as it relates to the issues they write or speak about publically. This is important as it helps the public view the issue of poverty from a variety of different perspectives.

NaiB has stayed abreast of City Council agendas and informs residents on FACEBOOK of meetings where issues relating to poverty are discussed. The aim has been to have many people in the room during the discussion who leave when the issue is finished being discussed. This visually demonstrates that the issue is important to many residents which can work to increase the attention Council gives to it.

Members of the public are able to speak for 5 minutes at the beginning of Committee of the Whole meetings. Nelson at its Best should occasionally provide 1 or 2 minutes of informative input on a particular theme. This keeps the issue in front of Council, may pique the interest of the assembled press, and advertises Nelson at its Best's existence to those in the room and tuned in to Shaw TV (and sometimes Nelson Becker's live streaming).

### TIMES COLONIST

#### Places large and small seek B.C. poverty-reduction plan

*Bill Cleverley / Times Colonist  
September 29, 2016 06:02 AM*

Poverty and homelessness are not just big-city problems, say local government officials gathered in Victoria this week for the Union of B.C. Municipalities convention....Nelson has a 21 per cent child-poverty rate, and in the past year experienced an eight per cent increase in food-bank usage, said Nelson Coun. Valerie Warmington.

Full article:

<http://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/places-large-and-small-seek-b-c-poverty-reduction-plan-1.2354258>

## **B119 Income Assistance Nelson**

Whereas in recent years the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation has changed its service delivery model such that in-person, direct services have been dramatically reduced and income assistance services are now primarily provided remotely by centralized telephone line and over the internet;

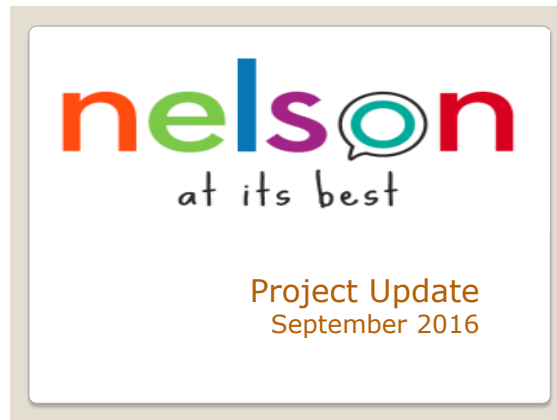
And whereas these service delivery changes have introduced significant barriers to people on or seeking income assistance and made it excessively difficult for many individuals to receive the support they require:

Therefore be it resolved that UBCM be requested to work with the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation to ensure that people requiring help to access income assistance receive such help appropriate to their needs and abilities (in-person where required) in a timely manner, and in a way that does not place additional economic burden on that person (e.g. repeatedly using pay as you go cell phone minutes waiting on hold for excessive lengths of time, paying for computer/internet usage, travelling long distances to Ministry offices from surrounding areas due to local office closures, etc.) and further, in a manner that does not download the responsibility for this assistance to other service providers without compensation for such additional work.

*Endorsed by the Association of  
Kootenay and Boundary Local  
Governments*

*UBCM Resolutions Committee*

NaiB formally addressed City Council as a delegation and provided an update on the state of the community with respect to poverty in September. Doing so just prior to UBCM provided additional benefit in that the mayor, councilors and city staff had the information front of mind as they engaged provincially.<sup>7</sup>



Nelson at its Best worked with regional, provincial and other end-poverty groups to provide background, draft resolutions on poverty-related issues and request that City Council(s) endorse and bring them forward to the Association of Kootenay Boundary Local Governments (AKBLG) and to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities. (UBCM).

In 2016, a resolution calling for adequate social assistance related supports and services was drafted in partnership with Trail end-poverty coalition and the BC Public Interest Advocacy Centre. The resolution was brought forward to AKBLG after being carried by Nelson City Council. Once carried by AKBLG, it was brought forward to UBCM where it also successfully carried.

A FACEBOOK page was established providing opportunity to draw attention to the larger economic and political contexts in which poverty exists in Nelson. This was done by selective reposting and commenting on media articles and public awareness posts produced by others and by production and posting of NaiB generated materials.

Updates and additions were made to keep the webpage fresh including adding the 'Make the Month' resource and a page launching several blog topics. The webpage requires periodic review to ensure dated information is removed and/or replaced and to change the cover image and topic. As the blogs were only recently launched and most public awareness materials set to be widely distributed soon, there has been little driving of people to the blogs as yet.

<sup>7</sup> The request to appear as a delegation at the last Committee of the Whole in advance of the September UBCM convention should be submitted at least 2 months in advance.

## **Goal 8: Actively engage as members in BC Poverty Reduction Coalition; Vibrant Communities Canada and Basin-wide Poverty Reduction Projects**

Work with regional, provincial and national poverty reduction partners in support of poverty reduction actions beyond local control but essential to addressing systemic aspects of poverty.

Nelson at its Best participated regularly in four of the Tamarack Institute's Communities of Practice: Vibrant Cities Canada, Living Wage, Evaluation and the newly-launched Vibrant Cities BC. In addition NaiB worked with Tamarack Institute to identify needs, articulate preferences and evaluate their work. NaiB was represented at the Tamarack Institute conference "When Mayors Lead" in Edmonton with support for travel and accommodations provided by CBT. While Tamarack Institute offers excellent collaborative and educational opportunities, the time spent engaged at this level is relatively considerable and must be balanced with work in other areas.

Nelson at its Best also participated in initiatives of poverty-reduction groups in the Columbia Basin. This included conference calls, a 'living wage' conference in Revelstoke, and work with the Trail coalition on a resolution for consideration by Nelson City Council (to bring forward to AKBLG and UBCM). Discussions with the Selkirk College Rural Development Institute on statistical analysis in support of Basin-wide poverty reduction work were also undertaken.

Nelson at its Best worked with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition to achieve Nelson City Council support for a second poverty resolution presented at UBCM. The resolution was for the BC government to adopt a poverty reduction strategy for which 17 municipal and regional district governments submitted resolutions. NaiB also participated at a BC Poverty Reduction Coalition press conference and will participate in an upcoming province-wide conference in Vancouver jointly hosted by the BC Poverty Reduction and the Living Wage for Families coalitions.

NaiB consulted with the Living Wage for Families coalition and participated in conference calls around the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives market basket and living wage calculation. More recently, NaiB worked directly with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives to finalize its calculations and to request assistance in undertaking similar calculations for household configurations other than the current 'reference family of four'.

*Canada without Poverty* works primarily on human rights issues as they relate to poverty. NaiB has been monitoring their website for useful research and other resources. Practical opportunities to establish a working relationship with *Canada without Poverty* should be explored moving forward particularly in further developing the human rights component of Nelson at its Best's efforts.

The United Way are very active in educating and acting to end poverty. NaiB connected with the United Way in Edmonton around the Poverty Simulation that they have adapted for use in their city. Although licensing precluded them from sharing their simulation, the discussion eventually led to NaiB being given permission to use the United Way's 'Make the Month' resource on the website and in outreach materials.

## **Goal 9: Identify themes and contributing factors that are missing from the analysis**

Each of the possible areas of action listed in the NAIB framework were researched as to specific challenges faced in community, work currently underway to address challenges, and further ideas for action. A variety of organizations and individuals were consulted. A literature review was undertaken. News and social media reports were monitored for poverty-related information.

Wealth inequality and the philosophical, policy, and other factors that enable its continued growth in society are critical issues that that generally show up as calls for 'systemic change' in poverty reduction strategies but for which few actionable ideas have been forthcoming. It is anticipated that further work in the area of human rights will further progress on this front.

## **Goal 10: Begin to develop strategy in 2 – 3 priority areas and implement where feasible**

Advance dialogue on key themes and factors to be tackled first. Further partnerships toward strategic project implementation as readiness emerges.

The NaiB Steering Committee (SC) identified three priority areas for moving forward. Sub-committees were struck in each priority area that included SC members along with identified 'champions' in these areas.

### **Priority Area 1: Rights of the Child (Child Poverty)**



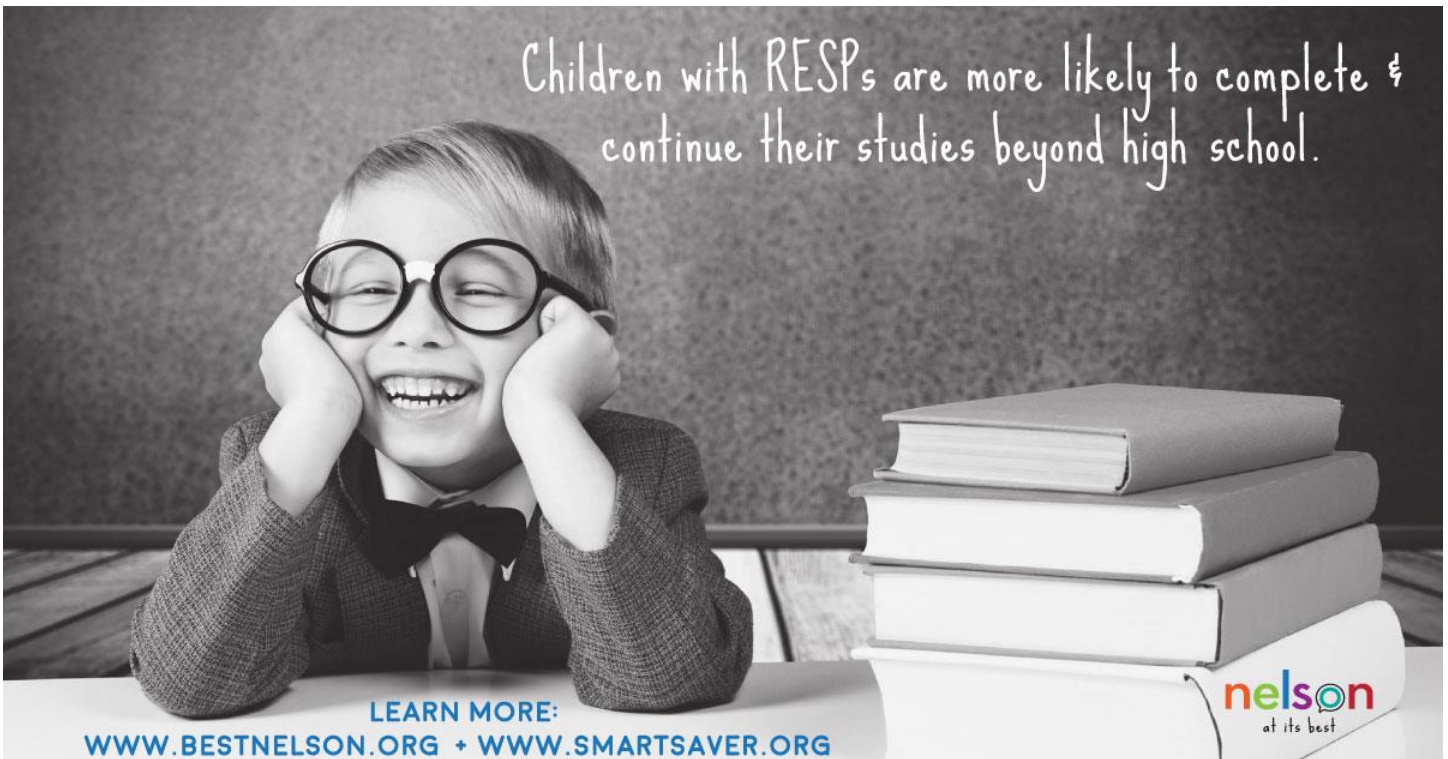
### **Government Entitlements**

*Work in the area of child poverty focused first on ensuring existing government entitlements are known of and accessed by Nelson families.*

- *A press release about the new child benefit program and tax filing assistance was written and published in the Nelson Star*
- *Materials were prepared to inform, encourage and assist families in applying for RESP grants.*
- *Nelson at its Best partnered with the Kootenay Boundary Early Years Office and the Nelson Early Years Table at an event for low-income families and individuals (Protein for People) at which information on the \$10/day Childcare Plan, the Federal and Provincial RESP programs and other incentives and initiatives were made available.*



Children with RESPs are more likely to complete & continue their studies beyond high school.



LEARN MORE:  
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**POVERTY CREATES CONDITIONS OF STRESS AND DEPRIVATION THAT HAMPER A CHILD'S BRAIN DEVELOPMENT AND HIJACK THEIR LEARNING**



**POVERTY ADVERSELY IMPACTS A CHILD'S KINDERGARTEN READINESS MAKING IT DIFFICULT TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL AND REDUCING THE LIKELIHOOD OF GRADUATION.**



**A CHILD WHO GROWS UP IN POVERTY FACES AN INCREASED RISK OF LIFELONG POVERTY**

**nelson**  
at its best

• **COLUMN: Social determinants that affect Nelson**

by Valerie Warmington

Jul 21, 2016

Nelson’s “Path to 2040 Sustainability Strategy” envisions a safe, connected place for people of all ages and income levels and a local economy that offers meaningful employment supporting healthy, affordable lifestyles.

One means to consider progress in this regard is a ‘social determinants of health’ model that provides a more nuanced assessment of population health and well-being than is evident from GNP alone.

Full article:

<http://www.nelsonstar.com/opinion/387843521.html>

Preliminary explorations of how the social determinants of health might be used to measure and respond to poverty in Nelson were initiated. Dr. Nelson Ames (retired) and Dr. Lee McKay (Kootenay Boundary Division of Family Practice) were consulted. Discussion focused on whether the social determinants of health could be used to illustrate the incidence and nature of poverty, direct interventions in response to poverty, and track their impact over time. Preliminary effort was made to illuminate points of intersection between Dr. McKay’s work encouraging physicians to use the social determinants both as a practical tool and as a basis for documenting patient information, and NaiB’s efforts to better define, track, and report on poverty locally.

Continued linking economic status with health status could provide more compelling evidence for government to take a preventative approach to poverty as a means of reducing health costs. As yet it is unknown what might be gleaned from the data collected by the Kootenay Boundary Division of Family Practice so far or what a system for comprehensively collecting and using the data might look like in future. Although the system is not in place to enable this yet, it may be possible to learn something about population health and economic status from the data. This work has been included as a potential project in moving forward.

**Priority Area 2: Youth Economic Empowerment**

Research findings suggest that that the situation facing youth in Nelson is more complex and challenging than NaiB’s initial research identified. Today’s young people face entry into a rapidly changing and uncertain economy. Expensive tuition and high interest rates on student loans are putting education out of reach. Even for those with education, wage prospects are deteriorating as the economy is offering few opportunities overall, and increasingly these are in the lower paying sectors. Predictions are toward further job losses as robotics and artificial intelligence come into play. Readiness for the new economy has been slow in coming due in part to continued government investment in established industries at the expense of investment in innovation and new opportunity.

Sub-committee discussions in this area are very preliminary. One thought was to initiate discussion with and amongst youth through some sort of broadcast media giving voice to youth perceptions, concerns, strategies and other thoughts on the economy and economic life. Not only might this be informative and empowering of youth directly, indirectly it would inform NaiB of how to further support youth in moving forward.

The possibility of a partnership with Kootenay Coop Radio (KCR) was explored as it might provide a structure and venue to develop this idea further. The idea fits with KCR's mandate, operations and interests. KCR would provide training. Programming could be once a week, once a month or occasional. The preparation of audio broadcasts would be the central component of the effort initially but it is possible that once the discussion is underway, video and social media posts could also be produced with the audio files generated. LV Rogers High School could provide additional opportunities to broadcast youth voices through in-school TV.

A champion to assist in taking NaiB's 'youth economic empowerment' work forward has not yet been identified but there are additional opportunities to engage on the issue of youth with the City of Nelson Youth Centre and the CBT's Basin Youth Network initiative.

### **Priority Area 3: Sustainable Livelihoods (Employment and Income)**

Work here has been largely undertaken under the auspices of the 'living wage' work described earlier. Additionally, guaranteed basic income and gender wage parity have been themes on NAIb's FACEBOOK page. Moving forward with the Community Living Wage Forum in partnership with NAEDP, as mentioned earlier, is most likely.

#### **Goal 11: Increase awareness and commitment of Nelson residents to the value and importance of reducing poverty**

Encourage people from different ends of the economic spectrum to talk to each other about poverty.

One way in which this can be achieved is through the 'Voices of Lived Experience' aspect of NaiB's work and in particular in the development of the Speaker's Bureau which aims to put people speaking about their experiences of poverty with others in the community and with media.

Additionally, initial consideration of what it would take to implement a live poverty simulation was undertaken as a means to help people 'experience' poverty and some of its challenges and consequences first hand. Following participation in a simulation presented at Tamarack's 'When Mayors Lead' Conference, we contacted the United Way regarding the use of their format for adaptation to the Nelson situation. The simulation used by United Way is expensive and it may be more beneficial to involve the local arts community to develop a simulation that speaks to poverty in Nelson. The Nelson and District Arts Council's Sydney Black has been identified as a possible partner in undertaking such an endeavour.

#### **Goal 12: Regularly present to the Mayor and Council**

Increase the importance, validity, impact and support for work on a poverty reduction strategy for Nelson.

Nelson at its Best was very successful at engaging City Council on the issue of poverty this year<sup>8</sup>.

City Councillor Anna Purcell, on several occasions, accepted invitations to NaiB Steering Committee meetings. She also attended the Revelstoke Living Wage Forum. She also agreed to speak at a Healthy Communities Forum hosted by Interior Health in Vernon about the work of NaiB.

Councillors Purcell and Warmington wrote columns drawing attention to different aspects of Nelson at its Best's work.

Two 'Notice of Motion' were brought forward to Nelson City Council due to the efforts of Nelson at its Best in partnership with other poverty reduction groups. Both proposed resolutions were carried and submitted for discussion at UBCM where they were successfully carried.

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<sup>8</sup> The current Nelson City Council has demonstrated concern for its lowest income residents and as a result the issue of poverty has been somewhat easier to raise and related information used as a decision-making lens than might otherwise be the case.

A presentation was made to City Council at its Committee of the Whole Meeting of September 19, 2016. The presentation provided Mayor and Councillors with timely information that was useful to their discussions at the 2016 UBCM Convention.

During UBCM, information produced by Nelson at its Best was used at a press conference at which elected officials spoke about poverty in their communities. NaiB materials were also distributed throughout the conference venue<sup>9</sup>.

### **Goal 13: Initiate a review of municipal/regional policies that may contribute to poverty**

The City of Nelson is aware of the importance of reviewing policies for impact on low income residents and is responsive to concerns raised in this regard. Currently, a city staff person is working through the City's bylaws to identify those in need of review by Council in relation to the healthy and inclusive community goals embodied in the City's OCP.

It was identified that policies regarding secondary suites need reviewing and possible revision to further encourage development of rental accommodations in the City. Reports of poorly maintained and rundown rentals led to requests for City Council to consider a Standards of Maintenance By-law. These issues are on City Council's list of topics to further discuss.

This year Nelson City Council ruled against a pan-handling bylaw brought forward by police and strongly supported by the business community that would have added to the economic struggles of homeless and people living in poverty.

The City is in the process of finalizing a new bylaw regulating short term rental accommodations as a means of preserving more affordable long term rentals.

Public infrastructure is in the process of being improved through the installation of several public washrooms in the downtown.

In recent years, the municipality has worked in partnership with the RDCK to successfully extend and improve public transit. The Moving Together Project of Nelson's Age Friendly Initiative reviews and works for improvements to public transit routes and accessibility in collaboration with Nelson Transit staff.

Nelson City Council participated in the creation of the new West Kootenay Food Policy Council looking at enhancing food security and affordability in the region.

### **Goal 14: Present a draft Poverty Reduction Strategy to the community for feedback**

Be ready to articulate priorities, targets, populations, timelines, implementation plans, evaluation mechanisms and resources required for success

A Poverty Reduction Strategy for Nelson was produced (see separate report – A Poverty Reduction Strategy). The components of most aspects of the work outlined in the Strategy were discussed with or emerged as a result of discussions with community members and organizations. The Strategy has not yet been formally presented to the community for feedback.

It was found that a key component of Nelson at its Best's work is in researching and sharing what is known about poverty, in empowering those living with poverty to have voice in community, and in generating ideas and opportunities enabling residents to easily become engaged in working to end poverty in Nelson and beyond.

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<sup>9</sup> Poverty was an underlying theme in many UBCM forums and resolutions.

In this regard, planning must take into account the importance of remaining responsive to changing information and flexible enough to respond in ways the community perceives important enough to contribute to. It is clear that much of the strength of the initiative lies in its ability to function as a network of engaged people able and willing to act, as and when needed. Having a roster of actions and responsibilities that interested people can be matched with is important; it is also important to include under the umbrella of the network, actions that individuals propose when they are consistent with Nelson at its Best's pillars and priorities.

## **Goal 15: Monitor implemented strategies against indicators of success to measure impacts on targeted populations**

**Research** – the statistical research produced through the course of this year's project helped significantly in better understanding and planning to alleviate poverty in Nelson and it garnered significant media interest.

Work with Living Wage for Families and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives was instrumental to understanding and completing the market basket and living wage work important to NaiB's planning and outreach work. Similarly, work with RDI increased assurance that NaiB's statistics were reliable.

The lived experience project work is beginning to generate information that will similarly improve NaiB's planning and will strengthen NaiB's efforts to inform community about poverty in Nelson. Early indications are that the process will support the creation of a speakers' bureau and lead to more involvement of people with lived experience in NaiB.

**Inform** – So far, outreach materials were produced to bring community attention to child poverty, government education grants, and the disparity between minimum wages and the cost of living in Nelson. To the extent that they have been distributed as yet, the materials appear to be meeting the goal of capturing attention - materials offered have generally been taken away and have sparked discussion at tables where they are displayed. One exception to that outcome was at the West Kootenay Early Years Conference where the child poverty post cards sent for display did not get picked up. The fact that no NaiB person was present to speak to or draw attention to the issue may have contributed to people not noticing or picking up the cards.

A press release was published in its entirety; a press conference at UBCM and a presentation to Council stimulated significant media coverage.

A FACEBOOK following is slowly being built and it is expected to grow as NaiB continues generating original content (possibility to engage Nelson artists?).

It is too soon to determine the extent to which the blog posts will be a useful outreach tool but, in general, engagement with the website remains low. It is anticipated that increasing the distribution of handout materials (postcards and business cards) will drive more people to the website ([www.bestnelson.org](http://www.bestnelson.org))

It is possible to estimate how many people are being reached in part based on printing quantities coupled with media distribution figures. It is more challenging to monitor the effect that it is having on people's understanding of poverty or on their perceptions about people living in poverty.

**Engage** - City Council is using NaiB data. Several councillors wrote about poverty in the Nelson Star in part due to NaiB networking and information. Many community members took time to discuss ending poverty with the NaiB project manager. Interest in a 'philosopher café on poverty' emerged and has started to grow as a result of a series of discussions over coffee. This outcome highlights how individual engagement requires time for relationship building.

A significant effort went into engaging with end-poverty and other groups regionally and provincially. In all cases these efforts paid off in tangible ways that furthered NaiB's efforts to shine a light on poverty in Nelson.

The lived experience pilot project based on information gleaned from conversations with several individuals experiencing poverty successfully engaged a number of single mothers in a discussion exploring their perceptions and experience of poverty.

**Act** - RDI responded to requests for assistance by raising funds enabling them to undertake statistical research on behalf of end-poverty groups throughout the Basin. This partnership is likely to reduce costs and increase overall productivity of NaiB due to significant time savings.

The Nelson Early Years Table and the Kootenay Boundary Early Years office partnered with NaiB to increase awareness and uptake of various government entitlements and other family supports. It is impossible to know the results of this joint action beyond reporting that approximately 15 information sheets were handed out and about as many conversations were had. It is also unknown the extent to which conversations with area banks and credit unions inspired them to take action to encourage RESP sign-ups and grant applications. While it is possible to monitor to this degree, there is a time cost involved.

Work with Trail poverty reduction group and the Public Interest Advocacy Center resulted in a draft resolution that was passed by City of Nelson, endorsed by the City of Trail, carried by AKBLG and also by UBCM. It's unknown to what positive effect this might ultimately have on the provincial policy, but the process of getting the resolution that far generated significant awareness of the problem.

### **Goal 16: Explore how social planning and development, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy, can be sustained over time in Nelson**

Promote the establishment of a permanently funded social planning and development function within the City to promote and coordinate efforts to improve social/community/economic health.

SPAN, the sponsoring organization for the NaiB project, has largely taken on this goal. The SPAN Board has been in conversation with the City as to how to best approach the community's need for social planning and development, including the continuation of the poverty reduction work. The perception within the City is that a great deal is being done to help low-income and poorer residents through such things as City's operation of the Youth Centre, CIP grants, and permissive tax exemptions for charitable and social service groups. The City also contributes to improving social, community and economic health through heavily subsidized recreation and cultural programming that keeps admission prices lower than otherwise, its Housing Committee and the Cultural Development Committee (to expand economic opportunities for artists and others by promoting cultural tourism), and through the creation of parks and other public spaces that benefit everyone.

While the creation of a Community Social Development Officer position has been effective in other municipalities, the City reports they are concerned about taking on work that will require the use of property tax revenue to respond to what is in reality a provincial and federal responsibility to be funded by income taxes. The City also holds the perception that there are many qualified organizations providing programs assisting people living in poverty and generating relevant information, and that the City is already engaged collaboratively and responsively on addressing poverty, including with SPAN.

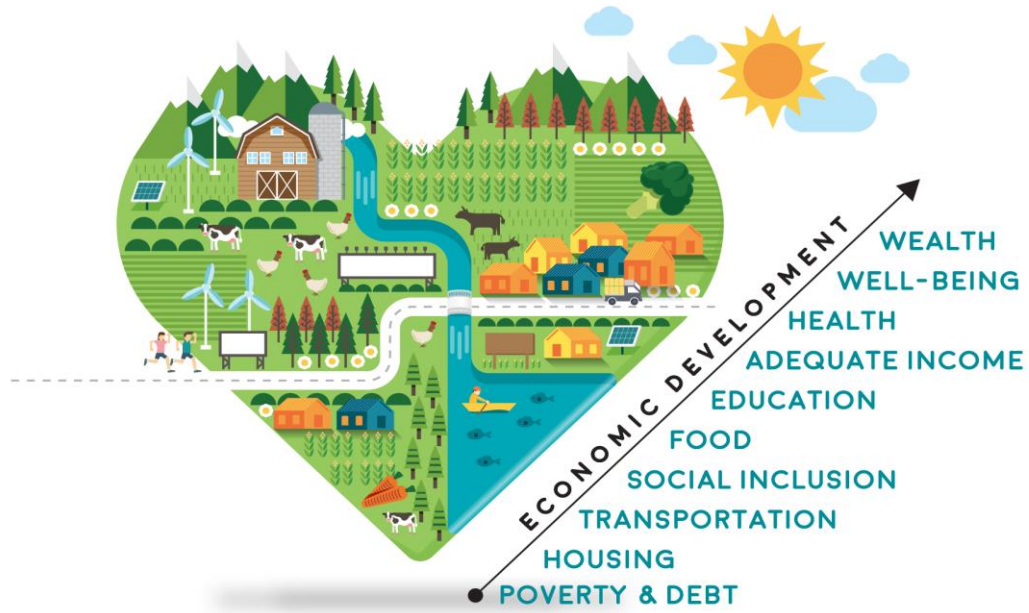
From the outset of the Nelson at its Best project, it has been clear that reducing/ending poverty is primarily an economic and policy issue, however, it is often viewed as a 'social problem'. We know that, ultimately, ending poverty in our city, province, and country will depend largely on government policy and other massive systemic changes. In Nelson, people living in poverty are largely visible to the social service community as that is the sector to whom they turn for temporary/charitable support. More sustainable changes lie with developing economically as a community so that more people have opportunities for employment, which necessarily increases their ability to participate fully and meaningfully in community. To this end, we believe that the Nelson at its Best project should be viewed as a community economic development priority and align its efforts with others working in this arena. This work is largely the mandate of the Nelson and Area Economic Development Partnership (NAEDP) funded largely by the City of Nelson. The partnership works to expand economic investment and growth in and around Nelson. To date, much of the work has focused on bringing investment in high-paying tech and online industries to Nelson.

At its presentation to City Council, NaiB suggested that the City could further assist in ensuring the well-being of its low income and poor residents by working through the NAEDP to also promote improved economic development and stability at the bottom of the economic spectrum in Nelson. This idea was the impetus for the graphic produced by NaiB for use on parent organization SPAN's AGM announcement (see below).

Discussions with City Council and city staff regarding the idea of both a social planning function and inclusion of poverty as part of the economic development portfolio are continuing.

## THE ECONOMICS OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

SOCIAL PLANNING ACTION NETWORK AGM AND PRESENTATION



Nelson at its Best, October 2016

## **APPENDIX 1**

**Poverty Profile for Nelson – Demographic data (separate pdf document)**

## **APPENDIX 2**

**Report on the Lived Experience of Poverty in Nelson (separate pdf document)**

## **APPENDIX 3**

**Poverty Reduction Strategy, October 2016 (separate pdf document)**